

ABSTRACT

Phase III data recovery investigations and artifactual analyses have been completed for Site 7NC-B-54 (Ronald McDonald House), which is located in Brandywine Hundred, New Castle County, Delaware. The archaeological investigations were completed as part of the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) sponsored Blue Ball Area Transportation Improvements project. Site 7NC-B-54 (Ronald McDonald House) is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and will be directly affected by construction associated with the Blue Ball Area Transportation Improvements project, since avoidance of the site was not feasible.

The fieldwork was conducted in compliance with a staged Phase III data recovery work plan developed and approved in concert with DelDOT and the Delaware State Historic Preservation Office (DESHPO). The first stage of the fieldwork called for the excavation of test units to delineate and capture at least three distinct activity areas identified during previous investigations at the site. At the completion of the first stage of investigations, three activity areas and a portion of a fourth had been excavated. Additional test units were proposed as the second stage of fieldwork in order to capture the remainder of the fourth activity area. A total of 1,310 lithic artifacts were recovered from the site. Debitage, cores, bifaces, projectile points, scrapers, and informal tools were recovered. No ceramics or artifact types other than flaked stone were present. There is no evidence that the site has been plowed during the historic period; however, no cultural features were discovered. Subsequent to the completion of the fieldwork, artifactual studies, including traditional lithic analysis, presumptive blood residue studies, and trapping and blood residue study syntheses were conducted in order to obtain information about the behaviors which created the site.

Each of the four identified activity areas represents short-term, ephemeral pre-contact period activities completed by one or a few individuals. The activities represented directly by the lithic artifact assemblages include manufacturing of new stone tools, manufacturing of new stone tools to replace worn ones, maintenance of sharp edges on previously made stone tools, and reduction of lithic raw material pieces to smaller more transportable sizes. All of the lithic raw materials indicate that the people visiting the site were obtaining their stone locally. Indications that the visitors to the site were also performing tasks not directly associated with knapping are present at two of the activity areas. The presence of specialized tools and tools demonstrating utilization and/or breakage associated with utilization indicates that domestic activities, such as chopping, scraping, or cutting, were occurring during the site visits. With the exception of one cluster which cannot be dated, the others are attributed to different portions of the Woodland I Period based on the relative, typological dating of recovered projectile points.

Despite the description of Woodland I behaviors as reflecting "relatively sedentary lifestyles, less portable storage technologies and non-transportable facilities, larger population aggregates, stratified societies, elaborate exchange systems, and complex burial patterns," the evidence from Site 7NC-B-54 indicates that none of these were happening at the site location. Instead, it represents the antithesis, a non-permanent location at which unrelated, limited and short-term activities utilizing locally available resources took place at various intervals over time.

Since Site 7NC-B-54 (Ronald McDonald House) was deemed eligible for listing in the NRHP, and avoidance of the site was not feasible, the Phase III archaeological investigations have served to mitigate the transportation project's adverse effects to the site. The goals of the Phase III work plan, although modified during the course of the project, have been achieved, and the study of Site 7NC-B-54 (Ronald McDonald House) has made a valuable contribution to Delaware archaeology. No further archaeological investigations are warranted.